



Guidelines on the implementation of Article 17 TFEU by the European Commission

Article 17 TFEU

1. The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States.
2. The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations.
3. Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.

For the first time in EU primary law, the Treaty of Lisbon under Article 17 TFEU explicitly introduces a dialogue between European institutions and churches, religious associations or communities as well as with philosophical and non-confessional organisations ("interlocutors"). In order to frame the dialogue and give guidance to interlocutors in the context of the implementation of Art 17 (3) TFEU, the European Commission has adopted the following guidelines based on the principle of "open, transparent and regular dialogue":

1. OPEN

1.1. Interlocutors

Dialogue partners can be churches, religious associations or communities as well as philosophical and non-confessional organisations that are recognized or registered as such at national level and adhere to European values. There is no official recognition or registration of interlocutors at a European level.

Independently of the dialogue, all EU interlocutors are encouraged to register their organisations in the appropriate section of the European Transparency Register (<http://europa.eu/transparency-register>).

1.2. Topics of discussion

All relevant topics related to the EU agenda can be addressed in this dialogue. Such topics can be raised both by the European Commission and its interlocutors provided both parties agree.

In the light of its policy priorities, the Commission may choose to suggest priority topics for discussion over a certain period of time with different interlocutors. However, this should not prevent both sides from addressing topical issues at any given time.



The topic and format for a specific initiative are chosen jointly by the Commission and the respective interlocutor in a spirit of constructive mutual understanding. The fact that the Commission chooses not to sponsor a particular initiative or the interlocutor prefers not to participate in a specific Commission initiative should not imply that either are in breach of their obligations or do not wish to enter into dialogue.

2. TRANSPARENT

On a dedicated website (hyperlink to: http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/activities/outreach-team/dialogue/index_en.htm), the European Commission conveys to the public all relevant information about the activities within the dialogue. Press releases and press conferences as well as other communication tools may complement these efforts when appropriate.

Access to other European Commission documents is subject to procedures set out in Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/access_documents/.

3. REGULAR

The European Commission maintains a regular dialogue with interlocutors at various levels in the form of written exchanges, meetings or specific events.

Interlocutors are invited to contribute to the European Union policy-making process through the various written consultation processes launched by the European Commission.

This dialogue may be conducted through *inter alia* informal meetings hosted by the President of the European Commission, bilateral meetings with Commission representatives at all levels and, in particular, meetings with the responsible Adviser for the dialogue with churches, and religious associations or communities as well as philosophical and non-confessional organisations.

Further instruments in this non-exhaustive list may include dialogue seminars and ad-hoc consultation procedures on specific and timely policy issues.